

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 020882
ORIGIN NODS-00

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S/S-O:AWOTTO

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 020882

NODIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: ASF MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH LEBANON

1. UNDERSECRETARY HABIB ASKED AMBASSADOR DINITZ TO CALL EVENING OF FRIDAY, JANUARY 28 AND ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY CONVEYED THE FOLLOWING ORAL MESSAGE IN RESPONSE TO ISRAELI MESSAGE RECEIVED PREVIOUS DAY (BEING SENT SEPTTEL).

2. BEGIN MESSAGE:

--WE HAVE CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT SARKIS THE POINTS MADE IN THE ORAL COMMUNICATION OF JANUARY 27 FROM FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON, NAMELY THAT ISRAEL WANTS THE SYRIAN FORCES TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE NABATIYAH AREA WITHIN A REASONABLY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME; THAT IF THE SYRIAN FORCES REQUIRE A
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FEW ADDITIONAL DAYS TO BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE THE COMPLETION OF THE COLLECTION OF HEAVY WEAPONS THE ISRAELIS WILL NOT OPPOSE IT AND NOT CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR THEM; AND THAT UNTIL ISRAEL RECEIVED NOTIFICATION THAT THE SYRIAN FORCES WERE BEING WITHDRAWN, IT WOULD HAVE TO INCREASE ITS READINESS IN THE AREA. WE ASKED FOR A RESPONSE FROM PRESIDENT SARKIS BY JANUARY 29. WE HAVE INSTRUCTED OUR

AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS TO CONVEY THE SAME MESSAGE TO THE SYRIANS, BUT HAVE HAD NO RESPONSE.

--PRESIDENT SARKIS REPLIED TO OUR CHARGE THAT DEPLOYMENT OF ARAB SECURITY FORCE UNITS SOUTH OF JAZZIN WAS NOT JUST A QUESTION OF COLLECTING HEAVY ARMS BUT OF PROTECTING THE CHRISTIAN VILLAGES. PEOPLE LIVING IN THE AREA HAD BEEN AFRAID TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES AND REFUGEES WERE AFRAID TO RETURN. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN UNDER EXTREMELY HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE MARONITE PATRIARCH AND OTHER CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO PUT A STOP TO THE DEPREDATION OF THE PALESTINIANS IN THE AREA. HE REITERATED HIS SURPRISE THAT ISRAEL WOULD CONSIDER THIS MOVEMENT OF A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF TROOPS AS WARRANTING SUCH A STRONG REACTION, SINCE HIS INTENTION HAD BEEN SIMPLY TO PROVIDE SOME SECURITY FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THE REGION.

--WITH RESPECT TO THE TIMING OF A RESPONSE, SARKIS SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE WITH HIS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WHICH MEETS ON MONDAY AND COULD NOT HAVE A REPLY BEFORE MONDAY AFTERNOON BEIRUT TIME.

--SARKIS REAFFIRMED HIS ASSURANCES THAT NO FURTHER SOUTHWARD MOVEMENTS OF ASF WOULD BE MADE WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE U.S.

--WE REALIZE THAT THE ISRAELI CABINET MEETING WILL OCCUR BEFORE WE HAVE A RESPONSE FROM SARKIS. WE STRONGLY HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR THE CABINET, IF THE ISSUE
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DOES ARISE, TO TAKE NOTE OF IT BUT TO TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION PENDING A LEBANESE REPLY. ANY ACTION OR STATEMENT IN PARTICULAR THAT WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER TENSION OR MAKE MORE DIFFICULT A REASONABLE RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE WOULD IN OUR VIEW BE MOST UNFORTUNATE.

--WE HAVE FAITHFULLY CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT SARKIS THE VIEWS OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. WE OURSELVES BELIEVE THAT SARKIS SHOULD WITHDRAW THE FORCES IN QUESTION TO PREVIOUS POSITIONS AS SOON AS CONDITIONS PERMIT. WE ARE NOT INSENSITIVE, HOWEVER, TO SARKIS' OWN PROBLEMS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. OUR CONCERN HAS BEEN TO FIND A WAY TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE WITHOUT ITS EXPANDING INTO A MORE MAJOR CONFRONTATION. IN THIS CONTEXT, WE CONTINUE TO URGE THE ISRAELIS FOR THEIR PART, NOT TO TAKE ANY PRECIPITATE ACTION.

END MESSAGE.
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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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